

(WASHINGTON, DC)—Congressmen Mike Coffman (CO-06), Scott Tipton (CO-03), Doug Lamborn (CO-05) and Cory Gardner (CO-04) joined together today to recognize October as Wildfire Awareness Month. Six Front Range Counties announced that they will honor the month in a number of ways including educational programs, conservation efforts, and increased outreach to forested communities about wildfire along the Front Range.

Reps. Coffman, Tipton, Lamborn, and Gardner have been working to reduce the risk of devastating wildfire by addressing the challenges facing Colorado's forests due to bark beetle, drought and decades of ineffective management as the result of a cumbersome federal regulatory structure.

In July the Reps. introduced legislation to increase local involvement in proactive forest management. The Healthy Forest Management and Wildfire Prevention Act (H.R. 6089) would allow governors, in consultation with county commissioners from affected counties as well as affected Indian tribes, to designate high-risk areas and develop emergency hazardous fuels reduction projects for those areas, enabling states to better protect their communities, species habitats, water supplies, and natural areas and help ameliorate those conditions that lead to unhealthy forests and devastating wildfires. The bill has cleared the House Natural Resources Committee and is awaiting a vote in the House.

“Although the major threat of summer wildfires has subsided as we enter the fall season, it is important to not only remember the devastation the North Fork, High Park, and Waldo Canyon fires caused, but also the continuing threat dry, overcrowded, and bark beetle infested forests create for Coloradoans. For this reason, I am happy to join our Front Range counties in recognizing October as Wildfire Awareness Month. This wonderful initiative highlights that we must continue to learn what we can do to prevent these wildfires in the future and that is why I have strongly supported the passage of H.R. 6089, the Healthy Forest Management and Wildfire Prevention Act of 2012. I believe Colorado officials have the ability, and should have the power to address the substantial risk that wildfires cause for their communities.”—Rep. Mike Coffman (CO-06)

“Colorado's county commissioners and Gov. Hickenlooper have shown strong leadership over this past year in which our state faced some of the most devastating wildfires in its history. I applaud their efforts, as well as their work to prevent future disasters, and inform residents on how to reduce the risk of fire and protect life and property. I believe that more must be done at the federal level to work with these state and local leaders to manage forests on public lands

and prevent catastrophic wildfire. By empowering these leaders to work with federal agencies to identify emergency hazardous fuels reduction projects, we can take a more proactive approach to keeping our forests healthy, preserving wildlife habitats and water supplies, and protecting life and property.”—Rep. Scott Tipton (CO-03)

“It is important that we continue to shine a spotlight on wildfire prevention. Those of us in the West who have experienced the devastation of an out-of-control forest fire know that prevention is critical. We can reduce the threat of fires in our national forests by allowing our state and local officials more say in the management of those lands. As we celebrate Wildfire Prevention Month, I hope Washington will do more to include local communities in managing our national forests.” – Rep. Doug Lamborn (CO-05)

“This summer hundreds of Coloradans lost their homes and property to some of the worst wildfires our state has ever seen. As we recognize Wildfire Awareness Month, we are reminded why it is important to give forested communities the tools they need to mitigate this threat. Federal policies have contributed to unhealthy forests across the front range, and it is time to give governors and county commissioners greater freedom when it comes to removing dead trees and managing forests on public lands.”—Rep. Cory Gardner (CO-04)

Further Background on the Healthy Forest Management and Wildfire Prevention Act:

In addition to providing states with increased discretion over the management of lands within their borders, the Healthy Forest Management Act and Wildfire Prevention would allow treatment projects to move forward under the streamlined review processes set forth in the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003. The Healthy Forest Management and Wildfire Prevention Act protects all valid and existing rights on applicable lands and preserves the current protection framework for wilderness areas and national monuments. This legislation does not create any new federal spending and has been widely endorsed.

#

Published October 9, 2012